





12. No. 317

HOW TO MAKE  
IRELAND SELF-SUPPORTING;

OR,

IRISH CLEARANCES,

AND

IMPROVEMENT OF WASTE LANDS.

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FROM THE  
'WESTMINSTER AND FOREIGN QUARTERLY REVIEW' FOR OCTOBER, 1848.  
WITH A POSTSCRIPT.

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LONDON:  
JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.  
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1848.

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LONDON :  
PRINTED BY WATERLOW AND SONS,  
66 & 67, LONDON WALL

## HOW TO MAKE IRELAND SELF-SUPPORTING.

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- ART. VII.—1. *Digest of the Evidence on the Occupation of Land in Ireland.* Circulated by authority of the Commissioners. 2 vols.
2. *Report of Evidence taken by the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization.* 1848.
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8. *Extracts of Evidence on the subject of Waste Lands' Reclamation.* With a Letter to Lord John Russell. By the same Author. 1847.
9. *The Improvement of Ireland by means of her Waste Lands.* By W. Fagan, Esq., M. P.

**E**VENTS are rapidly demonstrating, that, upon the speedy regeneration of Ireland depends the salvation of Britain.

That this is no exaggeration all must be convinced who will calmly weigh the following considerations:—

First; this one island must be exclusively burthened with the cost of the re-conquest of the other, and its continued military occupation so long as the intolerable misery and consequent disaffection of its population continues. And we say nothing here of the disgrace that must for ever attach to such a mode of governing a people of eight millions.

Next; to the burthen of repressing revolt occasioned by misery must be added the cost of relieving that very misery, by

continued drafts on the Imperial Treasury for "rates in aid" of bankrupt Irish Unions.

Further; the proximity of so numerous a population ripe for rebellion, and only waiting their "opportunity," must seriously weaken the external power of Britain, and place her almost at the mercy of her jealous foreign rivals. The enthusiasm with which large meetings in New York and Philadelphia lately welcomed the fabricated intelligence of the defeat of the *Saxon* army at Ballinarry, ought to warn us of the feelings with which our "Irish difficulty" is regarded abroad, and of the advantage which will infallibly be taken of it by the foreigner on every occasion of international difference.

Worse, however, even than these—than all—is the certain and rapid deterioration in the condition of the bulk of the people of this island consequent on the constant overflow into it of the increasing mass of Irish misery, without other limit than the reduction of our native population to the same level of squalid wretchedness.

For the immigration to which we are now exposed is not merely the ordinary, and perhaps unavoidable, influx of "hewers of wood and drawers of water" from the poorer to the richer country, which has always subjected our labouring population to a severe and galling competition—has established a crowded Irish quarter in all our large towns—and given almost a monopoly of the lowest and most toilsome branches of unskilled industry to the Irish in England. Nor is it only the hurried escape of myriads from a country afflicted during the last two years by actual famine into one where wealth and charity comparatively abound, by which beggary and pestilence have been recently propagated through the thoroughfares of our cities and counties.

Bad, and indeed almost intolerable, as have been these inflictions, it is more than all these with which we are now threatened. It is that a deep-seated and general feeling has come to be entertained by the owners of the soil of the sister island that IRELAND *must be largely* CLEARED *of the* IRISH, as a first step towards the improvement of their property—the only means, as they think, of saving it from being eaten up by paupers. And the clearance of Ireland of her supposed excess of population means, and can, in our opinion, eventuate in nothing else than its transfer in bulk to England.

The feeling to which we refer exhibits itself through every class of Irish landlord, and in a variety of forms—from the amiable benevolence of Lord Fitzwilliam, who yet cannot withhold the public expression of his opinion that "*the evil of*

Ireland, which must first be removed, is her seven millions of a cottier population"\*—and the phobanthropy (to coin a word) of the other, not over-wise, noble lords, who have been sitting silently for two years in committee upon a still embryo project of "Colonization from Ireland"—down to the pettiest middleman of Connaught who, no longer able to hire the labour of his poor sub-tenants by letting them conacre at ten or twelve guineas the acre, to be worked out at wages of four-pence, or at most sixpence, a-day, levels their hovels to get rid of the now unprofitable incumbrances.

The extent, indeed, to which the system of clearance is being proceeded with under the influence of this general feeling among those who have the power to execute it, ought to obtain far more attention from the public of this country than it has hitherto met with; for they are deeply interested in its results.

It dates its commencement from the period when the abolition of the forty-shilling freehold franchise put an end to the desire previously entertained by Irish landlords to multiply their tenantry for purposes of political jobbing. This motive having ceased to operate, they became suddenly alive to the fact, that the subdivision of holdings, effected chiefly by the middlemen, but tacitly, if not openly, encouraged by the head landlords, with a view to the increase of their parliamentary interest, had crowded their estates with a larger population than, under the usual wretched system of Irish agriculture, could be supported on the produce, leaving a sufficient surplus for rent.

The result of this conviction was a very general determination among head landlords, firstly, not to renew leases on their expiry, lest subdivision should continue; and secondly, to clear off, as speedily as possible, the smaller tenantry and cottiers, who were now looked upon as nuisances. Then commenced the practice of eviction and house levelling, which in many districts was largely and unscrupulously acted upon; occasioning, of course, a vast amount of suffering among the evicted peasantry, and, as a natural consequence, a proportionate amount of alarm, agrarian combination, and crime, among those of the same class who saw themselves exposed to this exterminating process, and resorted, in self-defence, to any means, however criminal, which might prevent its extension. Tipperary County, so celebrated for its outrages, has always been equally remarkable for the number of its evictions (which Mr. O'Connell, in 1845, stated to have exceeded 350,000 in number within the four years from 1838 to 1842), and the internecine struggle between its peasantry,

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\* 'Letter to Mr. Sergeant.' 1848.

anxious to retain their small farms and keep the sod turned up for the growth of the potato, and their landlords, who desired to consolidate farms and lay down arable to pasture.

When the lamentable failure of the potato, in 1845 and 6, by depriving the small farmers and cottiers of the crop on which they lived, rendered them still less able to pay rent than before, and still more probable burthens upon the estates they inhabited, the efforts of the landlords to get rid of them were of course augmented, and with these the retaliatory, or rather, in intention, defensive, agrarian outrages were multiplied as a necessary consequence. So fearful, indeed, and numerous became these offences, that Sir Robert Peel was induced to bring in his coercive measure of 1846, styled the 'Protection of Life and Prevention of Assassination Bill.' All must recollect how that measure was defeated by the Whigs, then in opposition, who, without probing too closely the true seat of the morbid feeling in which those crimes originated, declared generally for a remedial policy, in lieu of coercion; and out-voting Sir Robert Peel's Bill with the aid of the Protectionists, succeeded him in office, under a solemnly implied pledge to remedy the grievances which made the Irish so unmanageable.

But what are intentions or promises, however well meant, in the absence of sound views as to the cause of the evils to be cured, or definite plans for meeting them, and in the face of events, too, which defy control? The continued potato failure and increasing famine of 1846-7 added still further to the anxiety of landlords to get rid of the people on their properties, whom even the imperial largess of millions could not enable to pay rent—scarcely even to live. Moreover, the imminent prospect of an extended poor law was superadded to the other motives for clearance, which, consequently, was resorted to more largely than ever, in all its variety of forms.

For it is a mistake to suppose that clearance is effected solely by eviction under legal process. There are many other means of effecting the same end, apparently less harsh, and less likely to excite the attention of the public,—means well known to Irish landlords and their agents. One of the latter, and a superior specimen of his class, Mr. Kincaid, gave, in evidence before the Lords' Committee on Irish Colonization, in 1847, a very candid and business-like account of the system. He had himself effected the clearance of several thousand tenants from the estates of Lords Sligo and Palmerston, Sir Robert Gore Booth, and other landlords in the north-west of Ireland. And this was generally done through the means of emigration to America, at a cost to the landlord of from three to six pounds per head. On



### *Irish Clearances.*

being questioned as to the willingness of the people to be thus removed, Mr. Kincaid admitted enough to show how little even this, the most humane form of clearance, could be considered as the voluntary act of the exiles. *Previous to the potato failure*, he said, there was a very general indisposition among the people to quit their holdings; but *the famine* rendered them very tractable. A small farmer or cottier, necessarily in arrear of his rent through the loss of his chief or only crop, and liable, therefore, in law, to be summarily ejected on a few days' notice, without shelter or food—at that very moment probably possessing no means of supporting himself or his family, and dependent on the good word of the agent for the daily relief dole—was little likely to refuse an offer of gratuitous emigration to America, on condition of giving up his bit of land, and helping to pull down his cabin. Such a man, in fact, had no alternative, and could scarcely be considered a free agent. So, of course, he accepted, and emigrated—he and thousands of his class, under the pressure of a like necessity. The result of the vast amount of hurried emigration that took place in 1846-7, in these or similar circumstances, is now well known. It is briefly stated by Mr. Murdoch, the Emigration Commissioner, in his latest evidence before the Committee of the House of Lords.\*

“In Canada the mortality on the voyage, and in quarantine, among the Irish emigrants, was within a fraction of 11 per cent. The deaths among the Liverpool passengers, who are almost exclusively Irish, were equal to 15·39 per cent. The deaths among the Cork passengers were equal to near 19 per cent.”

But, as Mr. Kincaid tells us, and as we might indeed readily anticipate in the absence of his information, many landlords were either unwilling or unable to pay the sum necessary for conveying to the colonies the people they wished to get rid of. There was little difficulty, however, in effecting their object at a cheaper rate. The poor tenantry, situated as described above, were not in a condition to refuse *any* terms. They were *dying* of want—they and their families; and the offer of a few shillings, or a pound, at the utmost, was quite enough to induce them to quit, *voluntarily*, at it was called, the place of their birth, the scene of their past history and labours, the bit of land on which they had hitherto managed to exist, and to level the cabin in which they had grown up, or which they had built themselves, but where they were no longer permitted to dwell. Thousands upon thousands accepted such an offer. And when Mr. Kincaid is asked

\* Q. 2,908, ‘Minutes of Evidence before Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland.’ 1848.

“where they went?” his reply was, he presumed *to England*. Somewhere, of course, they went, with the help of the few shillings in hand; and became thenceforward, unless released from suffering by death, a burthen to somebody. But *their landlord got rid of them*: which which was all he wanted or cared to know.

Let us trace one of these families, which the evidence recently given by Mr. Wakefield, before the Lords’ Committee, enables us to do. He says:—

“I live in Cheshire, on the highway of Irish pauper immigration. I see these wretched people constantly. I saw an instance the other day. An Irish family encamped near my house. The moment the servants observed them they considered they were a pestilence (of course), and must be driven away. I went down to their camp, and found a poor family, consisting of four children, their mother, and grandmother. The account the woman gave was, that they had come from fifteen miles beyond Athlone. They had brought with them a tattered blanket, and stuck it on sticks out of a hedge, and slept under it on the bare ground. I saw smoke, and a kettle boiling, and asked, ‘What have you got there?’ ‘Nettles,’ was the reply. The story they told me, which was corroborated by the man, whom I afterwards met, was this. They had existed for some years on three acres of potato-ground. But they had none to plant this year. The work-house was overflowing. *There was nothing left for them but to leave*. Their master (landlord) said, ‘If you will go, I will give you a pound note,’ and with this pound they begged their way to Dublin, paid the passage of seven of them to Liverpool, and then begged their way to where I saw them, thirty-six miles from Liverpool.”

On being further asked, “Do you not think the immigration of Irish paupers, such as you have described, to be a calamitous circumstance to the country to which they go,” he replies (as who would not?):—

“I think the calamity so great that we cannot conceive the extent of it. It must deluge Great Britain with poverty and wretchedness, and gradually but certainly equalize the state of the English and Irish peasantry. The calamity is increasing every year, every month, every day.”\*

While the process thus described was going on upon hundreds of estates in Ireland, who can wonder at the frightful swarm of starving and diseased wretches which settled upon Liverpool, and Glasgow, and Bristol, and London, and indeed over all England, in the course of last year? Or can any one feel surprise at the extraordinary contemporaneous increase of agrarian outrages; which compelled the same Whig ministers who, in 1846, had indig-

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\* Q. 2930-31, ‘Minutes of Evidence on Colonization from Ireland.’

nantly repudiated coercion and Protection of Life Bills, to call Parliament together, in November, 1847, for the express purpose of passing a measure of that very character?

As one example, among hundreds, of the direct connexion between clearance and agrarian crime, as cause and effect, we may recall the case of the late Major Mahon, who is stated by the R. C. Bishop of Elphin, in a letter addressed to the editor of the 'Dublin Evening Post,' authenticated by the minutest details of names and numbers, to have got rid of no less than 600 tenants, comprising upwards of 3,000 souls, chiefly by emigration, in the eighteen months previous to the day when he was shot.

The following account of the fate endured by some of the victims of this Strokestown clearance appears in the last 'Papers relating to Emigration,' presented to Parliament. It is extracted from the report of Dr. Douglas, medical superintendent of the quarantine depot at Grosse Isle, at which the passengers of the fever-laden emigrant ships were disembarked, before they were allowed to proceed to Montreal, and bears date the 27th Dec., 1847.

"Some vessels had lost one-third, some one-fourth, of their passengers, before arriving at the quarantine station. Of these I may cite the ship 'Virginus,' from Liverpool. This vessel left with four hundred and seventy-six passengers, of whom one hundred and fifty-eight died before arrival at Grosse Isle, including the master, mate, and nine of the crew. It was with difficulty the remaining hands could, with the aid of the passengers, moor the ship, and furl the sails. Three days after her arrival there remained of the ship's company only the second mate, one seaman, and a boy, able to do duty. All others were either dead or in hospital. Two days after the arrival of this ill-fated ship, the barque 'Naomi' arrived, having left Liverpool with three hundred and thirty-four passengers, of whom one hundred and ten died on the passage, together with several of the crew. The passengers of these two vessels were sent out at the expense and from the estates of the late Major Mahon, in county Tyrone, and the survivors were, without exception, the most wretched, sickly, miserable beings I ever witnessed."

Now, without meaning in the least degree to extenuate the atrocious crime to which the ill-fated gentleman here named owed his death, it is right, with a view to the formation of sound opinions on the causes of such crimes, to remark that the friends and relatives of these death-doomed outcasts heard, no doubt, immediately of the sad fate that had befallen them, from some of the wretched survivors. And taking into further consideration that all their class, with one mind, looked upon their expulsion from the houses they had themselves built, and the

lands they had reclaimed from the mountain, as an act of gross injustice and cruel tyranny; can any one, with any knowledge of human nature, be surprised at what followed? So true is the expression employed by O'Connell, in one of his latest speeches on this subject,—

“The wholesale slaughter of the clearance system always precedes and occasions the individual assassination.”

However, by means of the Arms' Bill of November last, and the Special Commissions for the trial of agrarian offences, and the numerous convictions and executions that immediately followed, the system of agrarian crime, through which the peasantry were as usual endeavouring to protect themselves from the system of extermination pursued by their landlords (the one being always the counterpart and consequence of the other), received a severe check. On the other hand, the passing of the extended poor law of last year, and the continuance of the famine had, in the way already pointed out, added still further incentives to the progress of clearance, which the vigour of the Government emboldened the landlords to proceed with. Largely, indeed, has it progressed of late, under this compound influence of the suspension of the agrarian check, and the stimulus of the dreaded poor-rate. It is further facilitated by the complete prostration of the great bulk of the cottier tenantry, whom the famine has placed wholly at the mercy of their landlords, unable to pay their stipulated rents, and therefore liable to summary eviction,—and indeed, in most cases compelled to apply for relief to the Board of Guardians, which cannot be legally given so long as they hold more than a quarter of an acre of land; while they can only give up their land in general by giving up the dwelling-house with it. Indeed, the acceptance of relief in the workhouse—in most cases the only mode of relief to the able-bodied—forces them to leave their houses untenanted, which in their absence it is easy for the landlord to pull down.

This is so much the practice that Captain Horsley, Poor-Law Inspector for the Union of Milford, in the County of Donegal, says, in his Report of December 27th ultimo, to the Commissioners, that there is “positively a *race among the landlords to get their poor into the workhouse*, in order to be able to pull down their houses and clear their estates.” And it is their interest, of course, with this object in view, to refuse them work or assistance; and, indeed, to take every means, by seizing for rent or otherwise, to drive them to become paupers.

There would be no end to the list we might quote of wholesale clearances of these various kinds, that have been of late

reported either by the Poor-Law Inspectors or in the Irish provincial journals. Captain Wynne, the Inspector of the Carrick-on-Shannon Union, writes in April last, that he knew of at least 1,600 persons who were then wandering houseless through that Union owing to this cause. Captain Kennedy states, that more than *one thousand dwelling-houses had been levelled* to his knowledge within the single Union of Kilrush, in County Clare, *between November and April last*, and that the same fate awaited 500 more families before the end of the summer—a fate which recent accounts show to have, in fact, befallen them. At the ordinary rate of five inhabitants to each house, this would make a total of some 7,000 or 8,000 souls turned out homeless within one year in a single Union! A Roman Catholic clergyman of Mayo, in a recent letter, declares that upwards of 500 houses have been levelled within the last year, in a circle of five miles only in diameter round his residence! What would be thought of such occurrences had they taken place in England? And yet we wonder at the disaffection of the Irish—who are daily rebuked in good set terms in every morning and evening paper, as ungrateful barbarians, whom no benefits will satisfy, no concessions conciliate! There is little use in extending the black catalogue, or we might quote the razing of nearly the entire of three villages in Mayo, by Mr. Walsh, in the week before last Christmas, a fact made known to the public by Mr. Tuke, and though denied at first, fully confirmed on subsequent examination; or the more than one thousand evictions on the Ventry Estates in County Kerry of last spring; the reports from Major McKie and Captain Hellard of the harsh Galway evictions of Mr. Blake and Mr. St. George; and numerous others on the same extensive scale, which the Irish provincial press still almost daily record.

The despair and terror inspired by these clearances among the peasantry, and the dread felt by all of suffering the same fate, is the real cause, not merely of the agrarian outrages by which they strive to intimidate landlords and agents from such proceedings, but also of their general disloyalty and readiness to revolt against the law and the Government, which not only affords them no protection against such cruel treatment, but lends all its authority and power, civil and military, to sanction and support its infliction.

That portion of the public press by which the Irish character is studiously painted in the darkest colours has represented the peasantry of the disturbed districts as unable to plead their suffering under misery or oppression in extenuation of their crime. It is however the fact, that no district in Ireland has suffered more from the terrible CLEARANCE SYSTEM than those portions



of the counties of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork, Clare, and Limerick, which form the main seat of the rebellion. We read in the *Tipperary Vindicator* of June last, that "a larger number of persons have been this year ejected than within any similar period before. *In this county the number never reached half the amount.* Almost daily the sheriff, or his deputy, is engaged in the melancholy work of *levelling the houses of the rural population*; who have no resource but the workhouse; and not even that in many Unions, as the workhouses, with few exceptions, are crowded to repletion." We have before us a petition to Parliament, and a memorial to the Crown, both presented, early in the present year, from the parish of Ballingarry itself; the very spot where the insurrection first broke out. In these documents the misery and dread of the people consequent on the progress of the exterminating system is described as intolerable. They say, "It now bids fair to root out nearly the whole Catholic and indigenous population of the land." They express the "fear that their appeal for justice will be vain, to a Parliament of landlords, or to a Cabinet of landlords." They say that "remedies might be applied without any real infringement of the just rights of the landlords, or of any class, and with infinite advantage to the people at large." They ask for "some equitable interference between landlord and tenant, to protect the latter from the overwhelming power now possessed, and often fearfully exercised by the former over him." But they say, "they know that such a demand will be vain, being contrary to the system which landlords have long looked upon as a vested right." And while thus proclaiming their despair of obtaining redress from Parliament, they yet earnestly address their prayer to the legislature for justice and mercy.

Is there anything in this pathetic appeal contrary to the truth or to the right? Can any one wonder that the petitioners despaired of the redress of their grievances, who knows the long delay of the oft-promised measure of protection to the Irish tenantry, in spite of the frequent admission of its justice and expediency by governments and their commissioners: who recollects that the concession of the right to relief, in the extremity of starvation,—a right which Englishmen have possessed for centuries,—was denied until last year—the *third* year of famine, and till thousands upon thousands had perished of *unrelieved hunger* (?)\*

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\* It may be imagined that something has been done to check the clearance and house-levelling system by the act passed in the last session of Parliament, called the "Evicted Destitute Poor Act." And indeed the Government have, both in Parliament and through the press, claimed great credit for this act, as

The extent to which this depopulating system has proceeded up to the present time it is not easy to ascertain. Our very defective mode of taking stock of the population by decennial census only, gives us no information on this interesting point. The landowners have a natural anxiety to keep their proceedings of this character as much in obscurity as possible. And it is too certain that the Government, either from timidity or from sympathy with their order, have done their best to aid in this concealment, by refusing to institute or permit any statistical investigations on this head by the local authorities.

Still indications may be gathered from several authentic sources of the onward march of the terrific system. Some we have already quoted from the Reports of Poor-Law Inspectors, who rightly considered that circumstances so directly tending to increase pauperism in the Unions under their management as the eviction of thousands of cottiers and the levelling of their houses, were matters worthy of their attention, and not alien to the subject of their employment.

One document has recently been made public which tells a startling story of the wholesale clearance effected within a very short time past of the poorer portion of the agricultural population of Ireland. It is a census, by Captain Larcom, of the number of persons occupying land in Ireland at present as compared with the period of the last census, namely, the year 1841.

It appears from this comparison, that there has been a decrease of no less than 171,334, in the number of persons occupying between one and five acres of land, which were 310,375 in 1841, and are now reduced to 139,041. The decrease in the number of occupiers of land below one acre has been almost as large. However imperfect the means at our disposal for ascertaining its precise extent, yet it is certain that a most extraordinary social revolution has been taking place in Ireland within the last few years (and especially the last two), by which a large

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if it were a great "remedial measure." The truth, however, is, that all it does is to prevent houses being levelled on Sundays or Christmas-day, or in the night-time, or while the inmates are within, or without notice to the Board of Guardians. But it leaves wholly unaffected the absolute power of every landlord to level every house on his estate, without compensation to those who reared them,—to raze whole villages at once,—to depopulate half a county, if he should be its owner, and turn out its entire population upon the highways, without shelter or means of livelihood! It does nothing towards checking the progress of wholesale clearance; nay,—by relieving it of some of its features which were most repulsive to the public imagination, and giving the appearance of some chance of protection to the evicted outcasts from the Poor Law,—it may probably have the effect of facilitating and stimulating it.

proportion of the population have been suddenly deprived of their accustomed means of living. The question naturally occurs, "What has become of them? Where have these millions wandered? What position do they now occupy?"

No doubt many have died of want, or of the terrible epidemic which in Ireland always attends upon a famine. But it is known that the greater proportion by far of the victims of 1846-7 consisted of the aged and infirm poor, cripples, and habitual mendicants, for whom the relief works afforded no aid, and who consequently, before the extension of the poor law, perished in vast numbers. The able-bodied cottiers and land-holders can scarcely be supposed to have submitted quietly to so dread a fate. They would naturally struggle in some manner or other to avoid it. Many, doubtless, are among the last year's emigrants, of whom we have already spoken. But the bulk of them have most probably migrated only *across the Channel*, to seek in this island the employment which is denied to them in their native country, and to carry still further that severe competition for the lowest kinds of work which so seriously affects the condition of our native population—to lower our rate of wages, and supplant our labourers in their own proper field of employment, driving them upon their parishes for maintenance.

It is for the people of Great Britain, and those who take an interest in their welfare, to consider seriously how far and how long they will bear with this forced *INVASION* of our country, by Irish poor driven off the surface of their native land by its legal owners. The final consummation of the process, if allowed to continue, can only be the reduction of our own people to the level of Irish misery, and the ruin of all property by the universal spread of pauperism.

And this fate is to be endured by us in order to indulge a careless, spendthrift, indolent race of landlords in their short-sighted desire to turn Ireland into one great grazing country, and substitute sheep and bullocks for her native population, who *might* be employed by them were they possessed of energy and capital—or who would, if permitted, readily employ themselves,—in developing the vast yet hitherto almost untouched resources of their native soil, which is notoriously capable of maintaining double their present numbers, and returning a high profit upon all the labour they may bestow upon it!

"Sir Robert Kane," says Sir C. Trevelyhan, in his paper on the Irish Crisis, "has proved in theory, and many good farmers in practice, that *a much larger population might be supported* upon the soil of Ireland than heretofore; and this view has been confirmed by numerous surveys, conducted under the superintendence of the Board



of Works, which have disclosed an extensive and varied field for the investment of capital *on which the whole unemployed population of Ireland might be employed, with much advantage to all the parties concerned*: The great resource of Ireland consists in her soil. There are large tracts of flooded land to be reclaimed; and still larger tracts of half or wholly uncultivated land to be brought into a state of productiveness.”\*

But the existing landlords of Ireland (speaking of them as a body, and overlooking individual exceptions) will not or cannot do this. They will neither employ the people of Ireland to open up her latent resources, nor will they relinquish their privilege of continuing to retain their lands in a state of neglect and comparative barrenness. They will neither (if they can help it) part with their property which they thus misuse, nor allow its occupation upon such terms of tenure as would encourage and enable their tenants to effect the required improvements. The only mode of improvement which suggests itself to them—which they look upon as the simplest and the readiest means of avoiding the dreaded danger of ruin from the poor-rate, is the getting rid of their small tenantry and poor by *clearance*—the consolidation of small farms into large—the conversion of arable into pasture—the substitution of cattle for men—the razing of villages—the DEPOPULATION, in one word, of the country.

In such a state of things can the language employed by Mr. Mill, in his recent work on political economy, be considered too strong for the occasion? And is it not indeed absolutely necessary that the principle laid down by him should be acted upon without further delay?

“With individual exceptions,” he says, “the owners of Irish estates do nothing but drain them of their produce. Their only notion of improvement consists in turning out the people to beg or starve. But when landed property has placed itself on this footing, it ceases to be defensible; and the time has come for making some new arrangement of the matter. . . . An extreme remedy may happen to be the only one suited to so extreme a case. . . . The community has too much at stake in the proper cultivation of the land, and in the conditions annexed to the occupation of it, to leave these things to the discretion of a class of men who have shown themselves unfit for the trust.”†

If the Irish landlords have shown themselves incapable of using the proprietary rights entrusted to them in a manner consistent with the welfare of the community, or even the safety of the commonwealth, the state is bound to interfere, and so modify

\* ‘The Irish Crisis,’ p. 82.

† ‘Principles of Political Economy,’ vol. ii. 56.

these rights as to secure the great end and object of all institutions—that of property itself inclusive—the prosperity and well-being of the people.

Whatever modifications in the rights of landed property in Ireland may be rendered necessary for that paramount object, must embrace this one condition at least—that the soil of Ireland shall be made to afford employment and maintenance to the people of Ireland, which it is so amply fitted by nature to do if only their industry be judiciously applied to it.

Nor is industry likely to be wanting on their part to the full extent that it may be required, if only they are permitted to exercise it *for their own benefit*. The character of the Irish for self-support and self-advancement has been of late so uniformly depreciated by the English press, that however thoroughly convinced ourselves of the gross injustice of the charge (which originates in a want of due allowance for the discouraging circumstances in which the bulk of the Irish people have been always kept in their own country, and which have compressed their energies and prohibited the development of their industry), we were struck by the favourable testimony of an unbiassed witness upon this point, given the other day before the Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization. Mr. Robert Brown Minturn, a citizen of the United States, and, as a large ship-owner and commissioner of emigration at New York, a high practical authority, stated, in reply to this question: “Are there instances in the United States, within your knowledge, in which the Irish settler has proved that he is a class from which good citizens can be produced?”—“*The instances are very numerous* of their acquiring respectability, wealth and influence. Many of them become successful as merchants, lawyers, and physicians; and as traders they are numerous. They frequently become members of Congress, and of the State Legislatures.”

So much for the stale calumny about Celtic incapacity for advancement in social life, and in the higher branches of the industrial arts and professions. The ready willingness of the poorer Irishman to execute the hardest manual labour is too notorious throughout the world to be disputed. Hear Mr. Minturn again on this point:—

“In America they imbibe the spirit of the country. The Irish, who are said to be unwilling to work at home, are industrious in the United States. I have scarcely ever known an able-bodied Irishman unwilling to work. I can speak with great confidence with regard to their indefatigable industry and willingness to work, and that they do not seek assistance when they can obtain labour.”—(Qu. 3316.)

And his docility and aptness to learn when any one takes the pains to instruct him in any department of skilled labour, are equally well attested. The engineer officers of the Board of Works, by whom thousands of Irish labourers have been recently employed in every part of the country, upon drainage and other works in which a certain amount of skill is of service, uniformly give the most favourable reports of this valuable quality in the Irish labourer. His extreme frugality and disposition to save—that is, to accumulate capital—is notorious. One remarkable fact may be instanced in proof, as much of this characteristic as of others of a still higher class, on the authority of the late Mr. Jacob Harvey, of New York; namely, that in the course of the two years 1846—7, no less an amount than two hundred and fifty thousand pounds was remitted in small sums from recent Irish settlers in or near the towns of New York and Philadelphia alone, to their distressed relatives in Ireland! Is it possible for anything to prove more powerfully than this one fact, not merely the strength of their kindly and generous affections, but the plodding industry and close economy by which such a sum had been in a short time accumulated and spared from their own necessities for such a purpose?

Can there be any reason to despair of such a race? Can anything else be wanting to enable them to exhibit in their native country these same industrial faculties, but that instruction and encouragement—that fair chance of improving their circumstances by their own efforts—that security for enjoying the fruits of industry, which is to all races of mankind the one indispensable condition of its spirited and effectual exertion—but which has been hitherto denied to the Irish in Ireland?

Ireland is, in fact, no enigma. Nor are Irishmen—Celts though they may be—such exceptional beings as some would have it thought. The faults of their character are the natural result of the treatment they have endured. Little more than half a century back, the Celtic, that is to say, the Catholic people of Ireland, were prohibited by law from holding real property, or, indeed, any valuable chattel property! The abolition of those infamous laws still left behind much of the same spirit. The civil and political disabilities; the sixty or more statutes passed to increase the power of the landlords, without one to protect or secure the interests of the tenant; the partial administration of justice by the unpaid and exclusively Protestant magistracy; the denial, up to last year even (the forty-seventh from the union!) of the claim of the starving poor to relief! These are parts of the system which has given to the character of the Celt some of the qualities peculiar to a slave population. The bad example

set by their masters added its further evil influence. The extortionate, extravagant, dissipated, gambling, sporting, jobbing Squire-landlord, was imitated, of course, in his follies and vices by the Middleman-Squireen. The inferior peasantry were forced, in self-defence, to lie, to deceive, to fawn, to flatter, to conceal what little gains they could save, to feign poverty if they did not really feel it—in order to live. It has been often asserted, that even now few tenants dare to wear a decent coat, or build a decent house, or show any other outward signs of improvement in their circumstances, lest their rent should be raised upon them.\* There can be no doubt—for it was given in evidence by numerous landlords before the Devon Commission—that it is a common practice for landlords and agents to serve *yearly notices to quit* on all tenants-at-will, in order to keep them completely *in hand*, and liable to be at any time turned out by summary ejection at a few days' notice! And this in a country where three-fourths of the soil is held under tenancy-at-will!

Why, what else could follow from such a mode of treating a purely agricultural population than what we see—idle lands, and idle hands; wretched farming; huts and hovels for dwellings; bankrupt landlords; disaffected tenants; gold hidden in rags, while the soil is left undrained and but half-cultivated; a land full of weeds and soldiers, crowded gaols, workhouses, and police barracks; agrarian crimes, and a general spirit of combination against the law which oppresses the people so much, and benefits them so little?

The crucial proof of this inference appears from the opposite state of things prevailing in the northern province (even where the population is Catholic and Celtic, and the subdivision of land carried farther than in the south and west), because *there* the opposite mode of treatment has been pursued—not by law, it is true, but through the custom of the country and the wise generosity of the landlords in conceding a liberal TENANT-RIGHT.

The striking contrast exhibited by the province of Ulster to the rest of Ireland, thus seems to point out one, at least, of the modes in which the encouragement and permission so much needed by the Irish to develop, *for their own profit*, the abundant capacities of their native soil, should be accorded to them.

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\* Sir Robert Kane says, in his recent paper in favour of the small farm system, "They are afraid to let it be known they have money, lest their rent should be raised; they are afraid to improve their land, lest their rent should be raised; they are afraid to wear good clothes, lest they might appear to be deriving more produce from their farm than the miserable means of physical existence which their landlord will allow them to retain. Hence the money hid in thatch, and buried in barns. Hence the secret and illegal deposits in savings banks in fictitious names," &c.

The counties of Down and Antrim are occupied in yet smaller farms than those of Clare and Limerick, or the west of Ireland generally. Yet the former are highly productive, and well farmed, by comparison; free from pauperism, and their population loyal and contented.

Another leading idea is thus established, namely, that the improvement of the worst districts of Ireland does not require the removal of the existing tenantry for the purpose of consolidating farms. Sir Robert Kane and Mr. Blacker have proved that the small farm system (meaning thereby farms of from five to thirty acres) is not only consistent with the most improved husbandry, but will raise at least an equal amount of produce, pay a better rent, and *maintain a vastly larger population*. Sir Robert Kane, in his recent most valuable paper on this subject,\* concludes thus:—"There are not people enough in Ireland for small farm culture." But to bring out the full results of this, or indeed any other system of farming, the tenant *must be instructed*; and, above all, *encouraged* by security for being permitted to reap the fruits of his industry.

It is not the spirit of industry that is wanted in Ireland, but the *MOTIVE* to its exertion. Who would be industrious with a six months' notice to quit annually served upon him, or the knowledge that his rent would be raised if, by increasing the produce of his farm, he showed his ability to pay more? Who will build a barn, or a decent house, or out-offices, or create any of the necessary appliances to good agriculture,—or reclaim land from the waste, or drain it of its stagnant waters, under such a precarious tenure?

We complain of the want of industry exhibited by the Irish farmer, while we keep up a state of things which prohibits him from exhibiting it! We talk of the investment of capital in the soil being the one thing wanting for Ireland, and we allow a system of land-tenure to continue which makes it the act of a madman for the occupier of the soil to invest in it the capital he may, and often does, possess!

The encouragement and permission so much needed by the Irish, to develop *for their own profit* the abundant capacities of their native soil, must be accorded to them. An alteration of the existing laws that determine the mutual relations of Landlord and Tenant, and which, at present, are mutual only after an Irish fashion, being in favour of one party only—the landlord—has been prominently demanded of late, recom-

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\* 'The Large and Small Farm Question, considered in regard to the present circumstances of Ireland.'



mended by Commissions, and even promised repeatedly by successive governments; hitherto, however, postponed, like so many other remedial measures. Such a measure, if sufficiently bold and vigorous to meet the necessity of the crisis, and really to inspire confidence in the tenant class that they will be allowed to enjoy the full value of the improvements they may create, would, indeed, act almost like magic in calling forth the latent resources of the country.

For it is a mistake to suppose that capital is wholly wanting among that class. It is the privilege of spending it with the certainty of reaping its profit that is the one thing wanting. Give that, and Capital, now hidden in holes and corners, invested in savings'-banks and the English funds, or hoarded, to be some day or other taken off to America, will be forthcoming in no small aggregate amount, and applied by the existing tenantry, in addition to much of the labour that is now wasted in idleness, to that investment which the Irishman, if permitted the use of it, would always greatly prefer to any other—the culture of his native soil. But no meagre, ungenerous, doubtful, half-and-half concession of a pretended tenant right will answer this end—and we fear it will be difficult to draw from the purblind landlord-class of Ireland,—or even (let us say it openly) from a legislature composed largely of English landlords, nervous lest they should establish a precedent to be afterwards applied to England likewise—any concession of tenant-right equal to the demand of the Irish emergency.

Nothing can bring this about but the stern determination of the people of England to place the Irish landlords under duress, as parties who, by an abuse of their trust, have produced a state of things in their own island wholly dissimilar from anything that prevails in this, and requiring, therefore, treatment of a peculiar character—a state of things which, if not radically corrected, must speedily involve both islands in ruin, and to correct which, therefore, no remedy can be considered too strong or too radical.

But even any measure of this kind, however powerful its character, must yet fail to provide present employment for the whole, or anything like the whole, of the now unemployed labour of Ireland, taking into account not merely the three or four hundred thousand individuals of the labouring class, who have always been without employment for a large portion of the year, but also the probably equal number of cottiers and small landholders who have recently been, or are yet likely to be, deprived of their holdings by famine, and by the prevailing determination of their landlords to consolidate the smaller farms.

For this purpose, and, above all, for the immediate object—so urgently pressing at the present moment—of providing some productive mode of employing the able-bodied labourers who are now a dead weight upon the poor-rate, or the public taxes—some additional expedient must be resorted to. And no scheme that has been proposed to effect this end carries with it, in our opinion, anything like the weight of advantage attaching to that of a large reclamation of the waste land which abounds in the western, that is, the most distressed parts of the island—carried on as a public work.

This proposal, which formed part of the Recommendations of the Poor Inquiry Commission of 1836, has been recently reproduced and strenuously advocated by many writers and practical men well acquainted with the subject. Mr. Thornton, in the two works which we have placed at the head of this article, 'On Over-Population, and its remedy,' and 'A Plea for Peasant-Proprietorship,' puts it foremost as the measure most imperatively required for rescuing Ireland from the ruinous dead-lock in which she is now fixed. Mr. Mill, in his lately published 'Political Economy,' strongly supports the same view. Both authors desire to connect the employment of the redundant labourers on the wastes, with the settlement upon these lands, when partially reclaimed, of the redundant farmers who are being "cleared" from the over-peopled tracts of land at present in cultivation; and with a *proprietary* tenure. Mr. Thornton calculates, on what appear to be sound data, that no less a number than 200,000 yeoman farmers—a class so much needed in Ireland—occupying farms of their own, of from eight to thirty acres, might be thus established on the three or four millions of acres of waste land, known to be reclaimable with profit.

The same proposal was recommended to Parliament in the summer of 1846 by Mr. Poulett Scrope, as the best mode of meeting the then threatening potato failure of that year, in conjunction with an extended poor law. And a bill for the purpose, drawn up with much careful attention to all the necessary points of such a measure, was printed and read a first time in July of that year, but withdrawn on the second reading; the Government not being prepared to assent to it. The succeeding Government appeared to be even then convinced of the expediency of such a measure, which at the beginning of the next year was announced by Lord John Russell as one portion of his remedial policy, and a supplement to his extended poor law. That he showed so little decision and determination in this matter (probably withdrawing his Waste Lands' Bill as a compromise with the Irish landlords in his cabinet and in Parliament upon their

assenting to the poor law), we have always considered the most unfortunate circumstance of that unfortunate year. For it seems unquestionable, that had powers been conceded by Parliament to the Government or Board of Works to employ the destitute poor in reclaiming the waste lands, instead of spoiling the roads of Ireland, the greater part, if not the whole, of the millions spent on the relief works would have been saved—that is to say, would have been represented by the improved value of the reclaimed lands, and recoverable at any time by their sale or lease. The food-producing area of the country would have been increased, not diminished; the poor saved from the demoralization of useless work or gratuitous relief; and thousands of industrious farmers would have been by this time settled on small farms of their own, who have been since driven to carry their capital and their industry to America, for want of such an opportunity of investing them at home. The wealth of Ireland, in short, would have been increased, and the money of England saved.

Within the last two years numerous authorities of weight, both in Ireland and on this side the Channel, have continued to press upon Parliament and the Government the adoption of this scheme. In Parliament, Mr. French and Mr. Scrope were supported by a considerable proportion of the Irish members. Mr. Fagan, member for Wexford county, wrote an able pamphlet in its favour. Public meetings—among them, one of the freeholders of the county of Waterford, presided over by Lord Stuart de Decies,—petitioned for it. And numerous tracts by Mr. Douglas, Mr. Poulett Scrope, Mr. Baines, Col. Rawsthorne, and other writers have appeared in support of the proposal. The two latter are practical reclaimers of bog land, on a large scale, in Lancashire. Mr. Baines, writing from Barton Grange, “a house standing in the midst of a tract of 2,000 acres of peat moss, within a few years past as wet and barren as any morass in Ireland, but now covered with luxuriant crops,” estimate the sum expended in reclaiming the Lancashire mosses at about ten pounds per acre, on the average—“*all spent in manual labour*” at the high wages of that county, more than double the highest rate of wages in Ireland. Col. Rawsthorne gives the cost of the reclamation of a thousand acres of Rawcliffe Moss, near Garstang, as amounting to £9,000; which outlay now pays 10 per cent. in rental, and the reclaimed bog gives constant employment throughout the year to seventy labourers, at high wages.

So far from its being true, as some of the indolent landlords suggest, that their vast tracts of bog, which amount in all to three millions of acres, are less easily reclaimable than those in Lancashire, the contrary is the fact; their drainage being more



manageable from their ordinarily higher level. The general plans of main drainage necessary for this purpose are, moreover, already in the archives of the Irish government, having been laid down with great care, at an expense to the public of near £50,000, so long ago as the year 1814, by the Bog Commission, of which Mr. Lovell Edgeworth was an active member. This amount, therefore, of preliminary expense, and of still more valuable time, might be economised, and the actual works proceeded with at once; which the engineer officers employed last year on the Labouchere drainage work, and this year on those under the Land Improvement Act, are admirably fitted to superintend.

A practical experiment of the kind has been going on during the last ten years, under the management of Colonel Robinson, Director of the Irish Waste Lands Improvement Company. The operations of this Society have unfortunately been cramped, by the difficulty of obtaining adequate funds for carrying on a project of so novel a character, and in remote districts. Their success has been still further impeded by the difficulty of obtaining the concession of suitable waste lands from any landowner, *except for a 21 years' lease, a term of tenure too short to afford a sufficient stimulus for very spirited improvements on the part, either of the company itself, or of the tenantry they might settle on the land.* Moreover, they have had to contend with the fatal potato-blight, just at the very moment when the returns were beginning to bring in a profit on the undertaking.

Notwithstanding all these great disadvantages, the evidence of Colonel Robinson, given last year before the Committee of the House of Lords, for which we cannot afford room here, but which is full of interest, affords the strongest grounds of confidence in the results that may be justly anticipated from the adoption of the system on an extensive scale, and with a permanent interest in the land to be reclaimed. Colonel Robinson expresses his perfect conviction, that there are vast tracts of waste land in Ireland, the reclamation of which would yield a large return upon the outlay. He bases this opinion not only on his own experience, but also on that of several other practical persons, with whom he has consulted. He relies, however, greatly upon the stimulus which would be afforded to improvement, by the actual occupier having a permanent interest in the soil. The loss of the potato, he thinks, would not materially affect the calculation of profit, except by postponing somewhat the term at which the returns would commence, which he reckons, in this case, will be at the end of two years only, during which the settlers, if mere labourers, would have to be supported by wages paid for their labour on the works. But he thinks, "Many settlers of the class

of those small farmers, who now generally emigrate to the North American Colonies, possessing a capital of from £20 to £40, with a large healthy family, might be able at once, from their location on holdings of from sixteen to twenty-four acres, by a fair amount of exertion and perseverance, to provide for themselves and their families without any extraneous aid except occasional employment for the first year or two, and the stipulated allowances from the landlord." In all cases, he says, "The waste land would produce an abundant sufficiency of food for the maintenance of the settlers and labourers employed on it, after the first two years;" and the cost of their maintenance during that interval, while employed on the work of reclamation, would be a profitable investment of capital.\*

We have not yet adverted to the highest and most recent authority by which this scheme for the productive employment of the redundant and destitute labourers of Ireland is advocated; namely, the compilers of the two most interesting and instructive volumes which contain the Digest of the evidence taken by the late Commission of Inquiry into the Tenure of Land, presided over by Lord Devon.

The able and acute men who conducted that inquiry, and who are well known besides to have enjoyed the widest practical experience in the successful improvement of Irish estates, there sum up the results of their investigation as to the best, the cheapest, and the most effectual mode of relieving the over-crowded labour market of Ireland to the extent which they consider to be required, namely, of about 500,000 labourers, representing a population of more than two millions. We strongly recommend the study of this most important and authoritative work to those who may be led away by the notion, now so popular with the periodical press, that the cure of this evil must be sought in some large, though hitherto undigested, and but vaguely shadowed-out scheme of Colonization—a notion which Lord Monteagle has laboured hard to promote, but which the recent dissolution of his committee on the subject, after two years' protracted inquiry, without the production of a single word of report, or a single resolution in its favour, must have gone far to dissipate. The late speech of Lord Grey on the question shows the extreme difficulty of realizing in practice any of those Systematic Colonization schemes, of which we hear so much loose talk, or of doing much further now in this direction than continuing and extending our present system of aid to spontaneous emigration.

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\* Minutes of Evidence before Lords' Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland. Qs. 4683, 4670, 4677, 4689, &c.

The main difficulty is, of course, to provide the funds necessary to transport the emigrants, and to employ or locate them in a position to support themselves in the colony. But supposing the funds to be forthcoming, it is shown by detailed estimates in the Devon digest, that the expense of so disposing of the assumed Irish surplus of two millions of people would be at least twenty millions of money (and we think this estimate under the mark, judging from the recent report of Mr. Buchanan, the experienced Emigration Agent at Montreal, who reckons the minimum cost of location in Canada at sixty pounds for every emigrant family, over and above their passage-money), while the cost of disposing of the same number, by means of the reclamation and division of the waste lands of Ireland into farms of from 15 to 30 acres, would amount to but half that sum; or ten millions sterling.

But the superiority of the latter plan over the former is not to be measured by its costing less money. A far more important merit is, that in fact it would cost nothing—the whole expenditure being a profitable investment of capital, bringing in an annual return in the improved rental of the land, estimated in the digest at 10 per cent. at the least. And to this we must add the yet more commanding advantage, that the waste-land plan retains the capital and the people themselves in the mother country, whose wealth and strength are thereby augmented proportionately; whereas it is a very different thing indeed to transfer that wealth and strength to a colony, which may or may not at any time become independent of Britain—perhaps even a rival or a foe.

With every desire to see colonization extended and systematised—nay, with a firm persuasion that it might in time be so managed as to put an end altogether to any possible overcrowding of the population of this or indeed any other country—we must acknowledge that colonization is, *pro tanto*, essentially an abstraction of the elements of wealth and strength from the parent country, only to be justified as a national undertaking by the certainty that there is no longer room for their full development *at home*. While, as respects Ireland, we have expressed our complete conviction that the contrary of this is the fact; for putting aside for the present her many other latent resources, and confining our attention to the waste lands alone,—there is ample evidence in the several Reports of the Devon Commission, of the early Bog Commission of 1810-14, and of the Poor Inquiry Commission of 1834-7, to show how vast a field they present for the productive and profitable employment of both capital and labour—of that labour which is now treated as a nuisance, and unproductively maintained on rates levied from the scanty produce of

the existing industry of the country—and that capital which is now wasted in the maintenance of idle paupers—or hoarded in old gloves or tattered garments,—or at best, placed in the savings' bank at three per cent. instead of being invested in the improvement of land which would pay ten,—or carried off to fertilize the prairies of Illinois, instead of the bog of Allen and the wilderness of Connaught.

We are, therefore, for HOME COLONIZATION at the present juncture, in preference to foreign;—we are for the colonization of Connaught; for emigration from the crowded and pestilential suburbs of Galway town to the neighbouring wastes of Connemara—from whence, by a most short-sighted policy, or under the pressure of a miserable system of land-law, those very people have been driven, whose labour is the one thing needful to make the desert teem with abundance. Mr. Baines calculates that the three millions of acres of bog land in Ireland, if reclaimed and cultivated like the similar Lancashire bog farm on which he resides, would add to the annual produce of that country fifteen million bushels of wheat, thirteen million bushels of oats, one hundred and fifty million bushels of potatoes, and a million and a half of fat sheep—an amount of food sufficient for the maintenance of six millions of souls! And while speaking of Lancashire, we cannot forbear reminding the manufacturers of that busy district, who would probably consume the greater part of this food if it were raised, of the magnificent market for their special productions which they would have at their own doors almost, if the agricultural capacities of Ireland were fully developed, by the productive employment of the same peasantry who are now driven over to swell their poor-rates, and infect their cities with a mass of disease and wretchedness.

But the cant cry is, “Leave this to *private* enterprise.” “A government cannot employ all who want work, or spend the public money in draining bogs.”

Our answer to this must be brief. But it requires no laboured argument to show that if Ireland is left in her present position—drifting fast to ruin as she is, and threatening to drag Britain in her wake—to the efforts of private enterprise only, her fate, and ours likewise, in all probability is sealed. As has been often said, she is involved in a vicious circle of evils, which every day binds itself more tightly around her. The wretchedness of her people, caused by want of employment, makes them desperate, criminal, and rebellious. And their despair, crime, and rebellious spirit, scare away capital, deter the exertions of private enterprise, and thus perpetuate their non-employment and consequent misery. Under such circumstances, the only hope of

salvation lies in the interference of the supreme power of the State, acting for the benefit of all, to break up this circle of mischief, by setting on foot some productive work which shall enable the redundant labourers to maintain themselves by industry without diminishing the scanty resources on which the remainder of the population subsist; and thus to create a temporary lull, during which private enterprise may gather vigour and confidence sufficient to carry on and complete the process of improvement.

To imagine, as some appear to do, that further coercion, further suspensions of the constitution, yet severer laws, and the infliction of heavier penalties on those who break them, will have any effect in giving confidence and activity to private enterprise, is to persist, against all the light of experience, in the most fatal error of our past policy towards Ireland. The prompt and vigorous suppression of the abortive revolt in Tipperary (we cannot dignify it by the name of rebellion) the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and the concentration of an overwhelming military force in the disaffected districts, have for the moment created an apparent calm. But does any one believe that "private enterprise" will be encouraged to undertake improvements requiring much time to ripen them, on the faith of so delusive an appearance? Does not every one anticipate that this forcible repression of the symptoms of discontent and disloyalty among the bulk of the peasantry—their sufferings being unabated and their cruel grievances unredressed—can only concentrate these feelings, and occasion them to break out in a some more formidable manner before long? Agrarian crime and the spirit of rebellion can only be effectually suppressed by putting an end to their causes, the general misery and want of the means of living by honest industry,—in a word, the flagrant and palpable injustice of keeping an industriously disposed population on the brink of starvation, in a land amply capable of supporting them in comfort, if they were only permitted to avail themselves of its natural capacities.

As to the asserted inexpediency of government-works for the purpose of giving employment to the destitute able-bodied poor, let it be remembered that the Treasury is at this moment feeding large numbers of them out of the public taxes in unproductive idleness; while other thousands are being similarly fed out of local taxes, equally raised from the scanty means of the industrious classes. The question then is, in truth, only whether the able-bodied poor of Ireland shall be maintained at the public expense, *productively* or *unproductively*,—as useless paupers, or as busy



workmen, creating more than they consume, adding to the wealth of the country instead of destroying it ?

It is even more than this. Because the system of public relief to the able-bodied poor now carried on in Ireland treats pauperism as a crime, though it is notoriously unavoidable, visiting it with penalties with the view of deterring applicants ; and thus combines with the exterminating system pursued by the landlords to force across the Channel still increasing hordes of starving competitors for the wages or relief sure to be obtained in some shape in this wealthier and more generous country. And the continuance of this process will infallibly, as we began by saying, spread through Britain the gangrene of Irish poverty, Irish disaffection, and the deadly paralysis of industry that necessarily attends upon these elements of evil.

“Something must be done for Ireland,” is a phrase now in every mouth. We have here pointed out what we believe to be the only promising—nay, the only available resource for meeting the most pressing and immediate evil, the apparent excess of her able-bodied population. It must no longer be permitted to the owners of the Irish soil to drive this excess over here, because they are too indolent or too helpless to employ them in its fertilization and better culture ; or because they may prefer sheep and bullocks as more easily managed and less troublesome than human beings upon their estates.

Emigration will cost far too much money, and consume too much time, to be of great service in the immediate pinch. It has been going on very largely of late, and yet has produced no sensible mitigation of the evil to be cured, while it has occasioned much of its own creation.

“Private enterprise” is wholly paralyzed in the existing crisis, and cannot be expected to play its part effectually until that crisis is terminated by the intervention of some other agency.

That other agency can only be the State, the concentrated power of the public, whose peculiar duty it is to act as guardian of the public interests, so seriously imperilled at the present juncture.

And the mode in which alone the State can effectually intervene is, we are convinced, by organizing a large scheme of employment in the reclamation of the waste lands of Ireland, now lying as shamefully unproductive as her waste labour.

To attempt the improvement of the lands at present in cultivation, by thorough drainage or otherwise (however much they may need it), would be a far greater interference with private property, and with the proper field of individual exertion.

The waste lands ought scarcely to be looked on as private property, but rather as the public domain of the State, to be dealt with in the manner most conducive to the public interest—most certain to bring them into early and complete productiveness.

But it is not proposed to appropriate them in any other mode than that in which lands of far higher value, and possessing far greater sanctity as private property, are every day taken by the State for public objects of far less importance, namely, by compulsory purchase from their owners, at their full present value.

We have no space left for discussing the details of the proposed plan; as to which there may be room for doubt whether the works should be carried on exclusively by the Board of Works, or some other Government Commission, or by the Boards of Guardians of the several Poor-Law Unions where able-bodied destitution abounds, under the superintendence of officers of the Government;—whether funds for the purpose should be raised by loan on the credit of the nation at large, of Ireland in particular, or of the rates of the separate Unions benefitted;—whether the labourers employed should be paid by wages on the ordinary principles, or by rations, and a provision of clothing and shelter for themselves and their families while at work, in exact proportion to their wants, just as when relieved at present in the work-house, or at their own homes in idleness, or employed only at the penal and useless task of stone-breaking.

These several alternatives are open to selection, and doubts may be entertained as to their comparative advantages. Not so, we believe, as to the adoption of *some* scheme of public employment on a large scale in the arterial drainage of the waterlogged lands of Ireland, and the reclamation of her uncultivated wastes—for the purpose of immediately absorbing and utilizing that unwillingly idle, miserable, and discontented portion of the able-bodied population of the country, which must otherwise continue to prey in some shape or other upon the national resources, until the spread of pauperism brings about universal Ruin, or the discontent of the distressed multitude, Revolution.\*

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\* It is much to be feared, from many indications, that the present Government have not the necessary courage or sagacity for the vigorous establishment of such a scheme. They are scared by the mischiefs they themselves occasioned in 1846-7, by the proceedings under their mis-managed Labour-Rate Act, and by those which followed the equally ill-contrived *Ateliers Nationaux* of Paris in the last summer. The fatal error of both these plans was the same—the *non-productive* character of the works, which being openly acknowledged as sham works, and a mere pretence, demoralized all who were

Those who wish to form an opinion for themselves of the fitting details of such a project, should consult the works of which we have given a list at the head of this paper; and there also they will find a more full reply than our space has enabled us to give to the common-place objections with which the proposal is usually met by superficial reasoners, wedded perhaps, like the colonizationists, to some counter-project of their own; or, like the Irish land-owners, unwilling to part with the dog-in-the-manger privilege which they cling to so pertinaciously, of retaining in a state of desert barrenness immense tracts of wild land, now only tenanted by the snipe and the curlew, and affording a few days' sport to a few idle shots; but which might be made to teem with abundant harvests, and to afford industrial employment and a comfortable livelihood to hundreds of thousands of the Queen's subjects, who are now daily decimated by want, wandering in idleness over the surface of the two islands, wastefully consuming whatever they do obtain, whether by alms, by plunder, or from public charity, spreading misery, disease, and disaffection over the land, and endangering the public tranquillity, the security of property, the permanency of our social institutions, and the safety and integrity of the empire.

G. P. S.

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concerned in the system, converting it into a pure scramble for public plunder. Had the works in Ireland been of a *really productive* character—such as drainage or reclamation of land, the land-owners and rate-payers would have known they could not escape re-payment of the expenditure; and, instead of swelling its amount by jobs of all kind, they would have endeavoured in every way to check and reduce it. The labourers, on the other hand, would have worked with “*a heart*,” knowing they were adding to the food-producing capacity of their country. They would, indeed, have been trained in the habits of skilled industry, and taught how to improve the soil they have hitherto so misused. The Public Relief System, necessitated by the failure of the potato crop of 1846, might *thus* have been made the means of improving both the condition and character of the bulk of the population of Ireland; whereas, by an unhappy mistake, it was worked in such a manner as to deteriorate both, leaving the land less productive than before, and the people habituated to live in idleness upon their daily dole of yellow meal, paid for by taxation of the hourly-diminishing resources of the country, and given gratuitously to the able-bodied, in defiance of the common-sense principle embodied in the scriptural phrase—“If a man doth not work, neither shall he eat.”

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## POSTSCRIPT.

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It is time, indeed, that Ireland should be made self-supporting. And the urgency of this necessity must be our apology for recapitulating, at the risk of repetition, what we believe to be the only effectual steps for this purpose.

It is, indeed, high time! Ireland cost us last year some ten millions of hard money, *besides* the maintenance of the large military and police forces rendered necessary by the disaffection of her miserable population. This year, both police and army have been considerably increased, and great extraordinary expenditure, to an unknown amount, has been incurred in repressing an abortive insurrection. Further outlay is talked of as necessary in fortifying the police-barracks throughout the island. The Treasury, moreover, is at present making up the deficiencies of the poor-rate in the Western Unions, by grants amounting to some £15,000 per week, or at the rate, *already*, of three-quarters of a million per annum, though the season immediately after harvest is notoriously the best of the Irish year.

In a few months the sound portion of the potato crop will have been consumed, and the corn grown in the country either seized by the landlords, or sold to pay the rent they are by law empowered to exact (and are of course strenuously exacting), *a rent*, be it remembered, *contracted for on the assumption, of course, that the Tenant would have his potato crop to live upon.* By that time there will, on the one hand, be nothing left to take for rates; and on the other, the amount of destitution requiring relief will be enormously increased. We must then be prepared to support the greater portion of the population of Ireland in 1849 (as we did in 1847) on what is called upon the other side the channel "Imperial Resources"—in plain English, on public money, levied from the hard earnings of British industry.

And in addition to all these direct Irish burthens, we shall have to maintain something like a million of Irish quartered in the great towns of this island, or wandering through its thoroughfares—wretches driven from their native land by the impossibility of obtaining a livelihood there in its present circumstances, and coming over in daily increasing numbers.

Is it not then time to discuss and earnestly consider the question, how Ireland can be made to support her native population?

The case, shortly stated, is this. Ireland is amply provided

by nature with resources for enabling her people to maintain themselves by their industry, and beyond this to become valuable customers to Britain for a vast amount of her peculiar manufactures. Nor is there any reason to believe that their industry would be wanting for the purpose, if only the indispensable motive to its exercise—the right to enjoy its produce—were conceded to them.

But the soil—almost the only source of wealth and field of employment in Ireland—is locked up in the legal possession of an inconsiderable number of (for the most part) careless, bankrupt, or absentee proprietors, who have no power or energy to develop its resources; but absolute power to prevent their development by the refusal of just terms of tenure to others.

And to maintain this destructive state of things, we, the taxpayers of Britain, have to pay the Irish poor rates in addition to our own; to pay the cost of the hostile military occupation of Ireland; and to permit, moreover, that a fourth or a third of the population of that island be **CLEARED** off its surface, and driven into this, to swell our poor rates still further, and lower the wages and condition of our native population to the level of Connaught and Munster.

If this is to be continued as the permanent policy of our rulers, the sooner, and the more loudly, the nation protests against it the better, for the sake of Ireland herself, no less than of Britain.

Can anything be more suicidal and ruinous? If we must subsidize the West-Irish landlords, let it be in the shape of pensions, *after* they have sold the land they cannot, or will not, make a right use of—not for the purpose of enabling them to continue (like the dog in the manger) to hinder others from doing so.

Obviously the only fitting course to pursue is to require the rate in all cases to be paid, and, in default, to seize and sell the estate, or a portion of it—especially the waste land, which may be applied as we have shown, to so valuable a purpose—under the powers of the Encumbered Estate Act. The rate being, of course, in the nature of a first-charge. No other course is consistent with policy or justice, either to England or Ireland itself. And, in reply to any appeal *ad misericordiam* on behalf of those Irish landowners who, by the neglect both of their duties and their true interests, or through their own or their predecessors' carelessness and vices, have already inflicted so much frightful suffering on their fellow-countrymen, we must point to the Irish farmer or English artisan, whose very beds are frequently seized and sold from under them for poor-rate; and ask why the Irish landlord alone is to be specially exempted from the rigid enforce-

ment of the law, or the natural consequences of his own improvidence and negligence?

The very districts in which the Treasury is now paying the Irish poor-rate, are precisely those in which the greatest neglect is exhibited of the latent but undeveloped resources of the soil. The (so-called) *over-populated* Unions of Mayo and Galway, Roscommon and Sligo, only appear to be over-peopled when their population is compared to their *rental*, not to their natural capabilities for productive occupation, or for the growth of food. And it is only because the owners of the soil have grossly mismanaged the territorial privileges entrusted to them, that the rental is so low, and the people so numerous, and looked upon as a nuisance instead of the necessary instruments for extracting wealth from the land. Deer-forests, and shooting or hunting grounds, are very well in certain stages of society. But it will not answer to retain them in districts whose inhabitants are starving for want of food, and idle for want of work—both of which the land now kept in a state of barrenness might afford—nor at the cost of the depopulation of the country, and the risk of reducing Britain to the rank of a second-rate power among the growing nations of the earth.

This bugbear, indeed, of an excessive population vanishes everywhere before the light of an improved and scientific agriculture. Mr. Wilson France's moss-farm of 1,000 acres, near Garstong, affords constant employment to seventy labourers and their families, on land which a few years since was absolutely barren and valueless. Mr. Huxtable's farm in Dorsetshire keeps constantly employed twelve well-paid labourers on less than one hundred acres, and produces 1,600 bushels of wheat yearly, where only two ill-paid labourers were employed before, and a few beans and oats grown; besides fattening a large and valuable stock of cattle and sheep. Nor are large farms or large capitals required for accomplishing the same results anywhere. Sir Robert Kane proves that, with a *proportionate* capital, the same system may be followed as well upon eight acres as upon 800.

*This*, then, is the direction in which it behoves us all to look—to the increase of the means of subsistence, rather than to the decrease of population; us, that is, English no less than Irish—all, in fact, who are interested in the prosperity of our artificially constituted community.

By wise management of the natural capabilities of our home soils, we may (without the factitious and sloth-inspiring aid of a corn law) render ourselves independent of the foreigner for the main articles of our food, and secure employment, at ample wages to all our agricultural population, while creating at the

same time a larger home market for our manufacturers than the entire world without can afford them. Whatever laws of land-ownership or land-tenure obstruct this paramount object of *securing the utmost possible development of the productive capacity of the soil* must undergo modifications. The right to property in land, as to all other property, is instituted for the express purpose of encouraging and promoting, not of obstructing and preventing, industry and improvement; of increasing to the utmost the produce of the soil, not of checking and lessening it. In so far as any proprietary rights act in the latter direction, they are opposed to the fundamental principle on which the sanctity of property reposes. If industry were deprived altogether of the right to its produce, it would cease altogether to be exercised; wealth and subsistence itself would disappear, capital be neither accumulated nor employed, and society would suffer annihilation. This every one admits. But few can deny that the experiment has been tried in Ireland for a long time past *upon how small a portion of its produce industry can be kept alive*. And the result is very much the same as with the miser's horse in the story, on which a similar experiment was attempted.

"The progress of society, of wealth, of civilization," it is truly said by a recent writer, "depends on the productiveness of industry; and this will be determined by the greater or less force of the motives which lead men to exert their faculties to the utmost, and neglect nothing that can increase their efficiency. But the first and strongest of these motives is the certainty of possessing the fruits of their labour. Where this is wanting, men will be satisfied to live 'from hand to mouth,' without other care than that of appeasing the hunger of the moment. The acquisition of property is the aim and recompense of all the industrial efforts of man. Take away this expectation—leave industry exposed to the chances of spoliation, to uncertainty as to being permitted to reap its due reward—and, discouraged and disheartened, she will make no advance whatever."\*

Is not this the well-known law of human nature? It is indeed that upon which the principle of property itself is based, and its expediency proved in the interest of mankind. It is the argument with which alone the advocates of property can meet and confound the destructive principles of the communists and anarchists of the age.

"'Work,' says Society to men, 'Work, and you shall be secured in the enjoyment of the produce of your labour.' Having said this, Society has given the most powerful stimulus to industry. This is

\* Passy. 'Des Causes de l'Inégalité des Richesses.'

why Society has established a right to property. This is the property to which she has established a right. Property created by labour, and guaranteed by Society to its creator.”\*

But how do we find this fundamental principle of society—this indispensable stimulant to industry—respected and enforced in Ireland?

Through by far the larger portion of the island the cultivator of the land is expected to reclaim the waste, to drain the marsh, to draw forth all the latent fertility of the soil, *on a six months' tenure!* Nay, in very many cases, with a *notice to quit* served upon him yearly! If he is not to burrow, like a brute in a hole, in company with his domestic animals, and to thrash out his grain on the dusty highway, he must himself build his house, his stables, his barn, and other farm offices (for the landlord never does these things in Ireland), with the knowledge that he may, by the sudden caprice of his landlord or the agent, or the transfer of the management of the estate by the death of either, be turned out of his occupation, and deprived of the property he may have thus created, without a penny of compensation! Nay, more, he has good reason to believe in most cases that any improvement of the kind he may make, by adding to the marketable value of his holding, will be absolutely the cause of his expulsion, unless he consent to pay an increased rent—that is, to pay over again for the improvements he has himself made!

In such a state of the law, is there any cause for surprise that industry does not put forth all its energies? that waste land is either not reclaimed at all or by stealth only, by what is called squatting? that wet land is left undrained? that decent houses, barns, and outbuildings are not erected? that the pig and the cow are lodged in the same hovel with the farmer and his family? that habits of indolence are universally prevalent? that even where something has been saved by painful frugality, it is hid in the thatch or lodged in the savings' bank, instead of being expended in labour on the improvement of the farm? that the appearance of neglect and wretchedness is purposely carried to the utmost, lest any visible improvement should bring down the landlord or his agent with a demand for increased rent, and a notice to quit on refusal?

The moral no less than the economical effect of such a state of things must be obvious to the least reflecting mind. It is at the very root of the social condition of the country.

“The obvious and only remedy to this anomalous, denaturalized,

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\* Speech of M. Thiers of the 13th September, 1848.

and most ruinous condition of things lies," in the words of the intelligent vice-guardians of the Loutherstown Union, when describing the miserable position of the inhabitants of that district, "in an interest given to the farmer in the land he cultivates, and the improvements he may create upon it."

"It is not, we should hope," they say, "too sanguine a prediction, that if reasonable scope were afforded to the now pining energies of the farmer,—if he had *an assured interest* in the fruits of his exertions, the scene would at once change from the listlessness and despondency now witnessed on all sides, to one of animation and prosperity; and this hitherto half-cultivated soil, now encumbered with its perishing, and doubtless, from this source, demoralizing labourers, would present throughout its extent an aspect of contented industry and independence." \*

But when such are the circumstances, not of that Union alone, but of the greater portion of the western counties of Ireland, what do we find to be the conduct of the great body of proprietors of the soil? Instead of their holding out encouragements to the industrial efforts of their tenantry, by offers of durable tenure, or engagements to compensate them for their improvements, we find an enormous increase of notices to quit, ejections and distresses for old arrears of an impossible rent! Instead of giving employment to the labourer or cottier, whom the failure of the potato has wholly deprived of his ordinary subsistence, we find, in the words of the Loutherstown Guardians, "the labourer positively discountenanced, and the very shelter he was heretofore possessed of, refused him—thus compelling himself and his family to become a useless burden upon the Union, and denying to him the first law of nature, that man should eat his bread by the sweat of his brow." Nay, even where public money has been borrowed for the express and stipulated purpose of giving employment to labour on the improvement of land, there is but too much reason to suspect, that in a large number of cases the funds have been misappropriated, and have gone to satisfy the landlords' creditors, instead of paying the labourers' wages!

Then is it not time for the legislature to interfere, and insist that the PEOPLE of Ireland, those who actually occupy and till the soil, upon whose toil and frugality, more or less zealously, painfully, and skilfully exerted, depend entirely the greater or less productiveness, wealth, and prosperity of the country, should be secured in the enjoyment of at least such a fair proportion of the produce of their industry as shall stimulate their

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\* Paper relating to distress in Ireland, &c. Seventh series, p. 173.



now stagnant faculties to the improved cultivation of the rich but neglected resources with which a bountiful Providence has endowed their land, and which still, in spite of the recent visitation, will amply remunerate the application of their energies, if earnestly and judiciously bestowed?

Yes! it is time that the legal owners of the national soil should be taught their true position; taught (in the words of Sir Robert Kane) that "they will only endanger their legitimate influence and rights, if they attempt to retain for the future the feudal privileges and territorial powers which were the natural social circumstances of ancient and barbarous ages," but are irreconcilable with the light and necessities of the present time; taught that the first object of all institutions, that of property inclusive, is the welfare of the people; and that no social arrangements, which experience may have proved to be inconsistent with that paramount object, will admit of a moment's defence;—that society can no longer empower them to retain in a state of barrenness fertile land, which only requires labour to become productive, and at the same time to depopulate the country by capricious and tyrannical clearances of those very inhabitants whose employment upon the land is so much needed for the benefit of the community, and even for their own.

The Legislature must put a stop to a system of management of landed property which obviously and directly represses and prohibits industry, checks and prevents production, and deters from the investment of capital and labour in the land of the country—a system which at all times has retarded the growth of its wealth and prosperity, but which, at a crisis like the present, when extraordinary exertions are indispensable to supply the deficiency of capital and produce, occasioned by successive failures of the staple crop of the island, is fraught with absolute ruin to its resources, and no little danger to the very existence of its people?

Under the influence of this system, the economic condition of Ireland is daily becoming more hopeless—local misery and impoverishment daily embracing a wider circle. Those whom it has not yet reached are making their escape, in dread of its approach, and carrying off their capital and energies to other lands, and this must tend, of course, to accelerate the extension and progress of the mischief. The two eastern provinces are comparatively uninjured, as yet. But they cannot much longer escape the contagious influence. If the west of Ireland proves incompetent, under so suicidal a system of management, to maintain her population, the eastern counties can hardly hope to remain long free from heavy contribution at least, if, indeed, from plunder and

devastation. Even the remoter coasts of England and Scotland, have long since been notoriously suffering under the overflow of the misery of Mayo and Galway.

It is to the people of England, above all, that we address the earnest recommendation, that they would seriously and closely examine and weigh the consequences to themselves of the further progress of the industrial and moral paralysis that now prevails in the west of Ireland, and is daily increasing and extending itself.

We have briefly pointed out some of the various burdens which it already imposes upon us. But these are as nothing to what must result from its unchecked continuance.

Would that it were allowable to feel confident that the wisdom and energy of our rulers will not fail to cure the existing and avert the yet more threatening mischiefs! But, alas! the mistakes committed in the Relief measures of 1847, the errors still adhered to in the treatment of able-bodied pauperism, the protracted postponement of long promised remedial measures, and the vacillation and want of decision shown in the abandonment of others which have been even announced and admitted to be necessary—lead us reluctantly to doubt the security of such reliance.

In this, as in so many other questions of importance to the public, it is for the public itself to take a part in dictating the policy that must be pursued by the government and legislature. The enlightened inhabitants of the three kingdoms should no longer refrain from expressing their opinions on this important question, the proper treatment of which so deeply and directly involves their best interests, the question, namely, how the internal economy of Ireland can be improved—how her productiveness can be increased, so as to make her prosperous and wealthy—at all events self-supporting, and no longer a burthen and a drag upon the resources, the strength, and the power of the United Kingdom?

The means of such improvement are, we believe, simple and obvious, consonant with the first principles of political philosophy, and such as would be hailed with gratitude by the great bulk of the population of the island; while they would inflict injustice on no class, but eventual benefit on all. Nor is it yet too late to adopt them with success, though every day's delay adds greatly to the difficulty of their application.

They consist mainly, as we have already pointed out, 1st, in the concession to the cultivators of the Irish soil of such an amount of durability of tenure, or of assured compensation for the permanent improvements they may create in their holdings, as will draw forth their utmost industry, frugality, and enter-



prise in developing its natural capacities; and, 2ndly, in the mean time, and until this encouragement to "private enterprise" shall have produced its full effect (which must be a work of time) in absorbing the present apparent surplus of labour now lying a stagnant and ruinous burthen on the western provinces, the establishment there, for that purpose, of public works of a *productive* character, particularly the arterial drainage of the flooded lands, and the reclamation of the improvable waste surfaces which abound in those districts—works carried on for the benefit and profit of the public alone, so far as the public defrays the cost.

Other remedial measures, of a political or religious character, may be safely postponed until those here indicated, on which the very means of existence for the people depend, are completed and in operation. Indeed, to postpone the latter at the present critical moment, for the purpose of entering on the endless sea of debate and agitation which the proposal of political changes, or measures affecting the religious feelings of the people of the three kingdoms, must unquestionably give rise to, would, in our humble opinion, evince an extent of fatuity and blindness to the wants of the time, in the government which should commit the error, as must deprive it of the respect and confidence of every intelligent observer of the formidable circumstances which mark the present social and economical condition of Ireland, and threaten, not merely the prosperity, but the peace and safety of the realm.

We have used strong language and strong arguments, in treating this question—more so, perhaps, than will suit the taste of some of our readers. But the enormous importance of its right and speedy decision, upon which, certainly, the lives of millions, and the future prospects and fortunes, perhaps, of the people of the three kingdoms depend, must plead our apology.

THE END.





